

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W
-----121958 082127Z /61
O 081937Z JUN 78
FM USINT HAVANA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2127

S E C R E T HAVANA 1553

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FOR THE SECRETARYX

EO 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PDEV MILI CU
SUBJ: CASTRO COMMENTS ON PRESIDENT'S SPEECH

1. DIRECTOR OF CUBAN AFFAIRS, WAYNE SMITH, ON BRIEF
VISIT IN HAVANA, RECEIVED SURPRISE CALL TO COME TO OFFICE
OF PRESIDENT LAST NIGHT (JUNE 7). AFTER QUICK PRELIMINARIES,
FIDEL CASTRO SAID HE HAD JUST READ TEXT OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S
JUNE 7 ANNAPOLIS SPEECH AND WAS IMPRESSED BY ITS MEASURED,
STATESMANLIKE TONE. HE READ IT AS CALL FOR DIALOGUE IN ORDER
TO PRESERVE POLICY AND SPIRIT OF DETENTE WHICH WERE NOW
THREATENED.

2. SMITH SAID HE BELIEVE BOTTOM LINE OF SPEECH WAS THAT
US PREFERRED DETENTE AND DIALOGUE BUT EXPECTED TO BE MET HALF-WAY.
IF OTHER SIDE PERSISTED IN ACTIONS WHICH WERE INCOMPATIBLE WITH
DETENTE, THERE WOULD BE LITTLE CHOICE BUT TO RETURN TO POSTURE
OF CONFRONTATION. HENCE, MORE THAN A CALL FOR DIALOGUE, SPEECH
REPRESENTED CALL FOR EVIDENCE OF RESTRAINT ON OTHER
SIDE.

3. CASTRO REPLIED THAT IT WAS NOT CUBAN ACTIONS WHICH
ENDANGERED DETENTE. CUBA HAD SAME RIGHT AS ANY SOVERIEGN

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STATE TO ASSIST FRIENDLY GOVERNMENTS. THIS WAS NOT
INCOMPATIBLE WITH DETENTE. US HAD TROOPS ALL OVER THE WORLD.
CUBA HAD DUTY TO FIRENDS THREATENED BY AGGRESSION. ANGOLA
HAD BEEN INVADED BY SOUTH AFRICA, ETHIOPIA BY SOMALIA.
US SPOKE OF WITHDRAWAL OF CUBAN TROOPS FROM ANGOLA, BUT
RECENT CASSINGA RAID SUGGESTED WHAT CONSEQUENCES OF THAT
MIGHT BE. EVEN SO, HE SAID, CUBA WOULD IN ALL CASES PREFER

PEACEFUL SOLUTION RATHER THAN ARMED CONFLICT. HE STRONGLY DENIED THAT CUBA WAS INVOLVED IN INVASION OF SHABA PROVINCE AND REPEATED EARLIER ASSERTIONS THAT HE WANTED TO SEE PEACE BETWEEN ZAIRE AND ANGOLA. IN ERITREA, HE SAID, CUBA PREFERRED AND WAS WORKING FOR PEACEFUL SOLUTION. THAT MUST BE CLEAR TO US. HE QUESTIONED WHETHER US ASSISTANCE TO SOMALIA WOULD CONTRIBUTE TO PEACE IN THE AREA.

4. SMITH POINTED OUT THAT US ASSISTANCE WAS TO HELP SOMALI DEFEND ITSELF AND WAS CONDITIONED ON SOMALI ASSURANCES THAT IT WOULD NOT ATTACH ITS NEIGHBORS.

5. CASTRO SAID SIAD BARRE'S ASSURANCES WERE NOT WORTH PAPER THEY WERE PRINTED ON, AS CASTRO HIMSELF HAD LEARNED THROUGH SAD EXPERIENCE.

6. CUBAN PRESENCE IN AFRICA WAS NOT SUBJECT FOR NEGOTIATION, CASTRO REITERATED. HOWEVER, IT WAS CLEAR THAT DIS-AGREEMENTS AND CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS COULD ONLY BE ADDRESSED AND DEFUSED THROUGH CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE. CUBA WAS ALWAYS PREPARED TO DISCUSS ISSUES. HE ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT CUBA WOULD NOT BE INTIMIDATED. HE HAD RECENTLY BEEN HEARING ON RADIO REPORTS THAT US WAS PLANNING SERIES OF THREATENING ACTIONS AGAINST CUBA. CUBA HAD BEEN THROUGH ALL THAT BEFORE, HE SAID, EVERYTHING FROM HOSTILE PROPAGANDA BROADCASTS TO ATTEMPTS TO ASSASSINATE HIM. IT HAD NOT BEEN INTIMIDATED
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THEN AND WOULD NOT BE NOW. HE HAD CONCLUDED FROM PRESIDENT CARTER'S EARLIER STATEMENTS REGARDING NEED FOR OPEN COMMUNICATIONS WITH ALL GOVERNMENTS, FROM OPENING OF INTERESTS SECTIONS AND OTHER MOVES, THAT US WISHED TO PLACE RELATIONS WITH CUBA IN MORE RATIONAL, CONSTRUCTIVE CONTEXT; IF NOT, SO BE IT. HE NOTED THAT THERE SEEMED TO BE DISAGREEMENTS IN US ITSELF AS TO WHAT POSTURE TO ADOPT TOWARD CUBA.

7. SMITH REPLIED THAT IT WAS IN NATURE OF OUR SYSTEM THAT THERE WERE VARIOUS CURRENTS OF OPINION AND INTERPRETATION, EVEN WITHIN GOVERNMENT. FREE PLAY OF IDEAS WAS ONE OF OUR STRENGTHS. THIS SHOULD NOT BE MISINTERPRETED AS LACK OF RESOLVE. ALL SECTORS WOULD STAND FULLY BEHIND THE POLICIES DECIDED UPON BY THE PRESIDENT. FURTHER, EVEN THOSE WHO HAD BEEN MOST IN FAVOR OF NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS WITH CUBA SAY CLEARLY THAT PROCESS COULD NOT MOVE FORWARD SO LONG AS THERE WERE 40,000 CUBAN TROOPS AND NO EVIDENCE OF CUBAN RESTRAINT IN AFRICA. ONE COULD NOT SPEAK OF IMPROVING BILATERAL RELATIONS AT SAME TIME THAT THERE ARE GROWING CONFLICTS BETWEEN US IN MULTILATERAL CONTEXT.

8. CASTRO CONCLUDED THAT THAT MIGHT BE SO. CUBAN APPROACH

WAS PRAGMATIC AND IT RECOGNIZED THAT IMPROVEMENT IN RELATIONS HAD TO FLOW FROM SOLUTION OF PROBLEMS AND DISAGREEMENTS WHICH NOW STOOD BETWEEN US; OTHERWISE, IT WOULD NOT REFLECT REALITY OF SITUATION. BUT SUCH SOLUTIONS COULD NOT BE ACHIEVED BY CLOSING DOORS TO DIALOGUE. PRESIDENT CARTER CALLED FOR SUCH DIALOGUE IN HIS SPEECH BUT OTHER MEASURES NOW BEING DISCUSSED IN WASHINGTON APPEARED AIMED AT CLOSING IT OFF. HE WOULD WAIT AND SEE WHICH COURSE US HAD IN FACT CHOSEN.

9. SMITH REITERATED THAT PRESIDENT HAD CALLED NOT ONLY FOR DIALOGUE BUT FOR EVIDENCE OF RESTRAINT ON OTHER SIDE. HE COULD NOT PRESUME TO ANTICIPATE WHAT THE DECISIONS OF HIS GOVERNMENT MIGHT BE, BUT IT WAS LOGICAL TO ASSUME THAT IF SUCH EVIDENCE WERE NOT FORTHCOMING, US WOULD REVIEW ITS OPTIONS
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10. FYI: ITALIAN AMBASSADOR HERE HAS FOUND OUT ABOUT SMITH-CASTRO MEETING (PRESUMABLY FROM CUBANS) AND, JUDGING FROM PAST EXPERIENCE, KNOWLEDGE OF MEETING WILL SOON BECOME WIDESPREAD IN DIPLOMATIC CORPS. IN RESPONSE TO ITALIANS QUESTIONS, JUNE 8, ACTING USINT CHIEF SIMPLY CHARACTERIZED CASTRO'S STATEMENTS AS ADVOCACY OF CONTINUED DIALOGUE, WITHOUT ANY SUGGESTIONS OF CHANGE OF CUBAN POLICY IN AFRICA.END FYI.
GLASSMAN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESIDENT, DETENTE, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS, SPEECHES, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, CAT-C, CHEROEE 6-9-78
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 08 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978HAVANA01553
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: P840166-1859
Format: TEL
From: HAVANA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780682/aaaacssl.tel
Line Count: 145
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: f732408f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15 jul 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2441891
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CASTRO COMMENTS ON PRESIDENT'S SPEECH
TAGS: PDEV, MILI, CU, US, (CARTER, JIMMY), (CASTRO RUZ, FIDEL)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/f732408f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014